

HCAP Gliding Scholarship 2026



I was incredibly fortunate to have been selected for the Gliding Scholarship with the Honourable Company of Air Pilots this year. I've never had the chance to go gliding over an extended period of time, so I was really looking forward to experiencing life at the Midland Gliding Club, meeting new people and developing my skills.

I arrived at the club on the Sunday before the course began, which gave me the opportunity to settle in, meet the other scholarship winners and get to know some of the members. The Midland Gliding Club is situated alongside the beautiful Long Mynd in Shropshire, which was perfect for going on walks during the week.



A typical day would begin with unpacking the hangar and carrying out daily inspections and checks to make sure everything was ready to go. Although sometimes tiring, this part of the day taught us an important lesson about the importance of stop signals, particularly when moving the gliders so closely together, to reduce the risk of damage. We would then head over to Maisy's Cafe, where Helen would make us a lovely breakfast. The meals were always something to look forward to and gave us a chance to sit together and share our experiences.

Everywhere around the airfield, there was a strong sense of teamwork. There were lots of jobs happening all the time, such as towing gliders, attaching cables, keeping logs and, most

importantly, looking out. It was a great environment to experience, and by dividing our labour, we were able to launch the gliders efficiently and safely throughout the week. One job that I asked to learn more about was the winch retrieve, which uses a second winch attached to the retrieve cable to efficiently return the cable to the next glider in the queue. After a few days of practice, I was able to be trained on the retrieve, which mainly involved communicating with the main winch driver and following a sequence of actions and signals. I had to communicate clearly, be prepared to operate the guillotine in an emergency and always maintain a good lookout around the airfield. Attention to detail and cross-checking were crucial. Before each launch, we had to ensure that the main winch knew which glider was next in line, the correct strop was attached, the parachute was not tangled and nobody was standing near the cable.



When we were able to fly, the experience was incredible. I started the week feeling quite nervous about taking control, but those nerves quickly disappeared as my instructor, Sam, was very reassuring. As the week went on, I became more comfortable doing most of the flying myself. We flew in thermals, went ridge soaring and practised different exercises, such as stalls and co-ordinated turns. I was particularly lucky to have flights over an hour long as we were often able to find rising air underneath dark 'cloud streets'. Also getting to do a loop was an amazing experience that I'll never forget! We also spent lots of time talking about circuits, all the different possibilities for our landing areas and how to judge the

angle using a reference point. On one occasion, another glider was in our landing area, meaning we had to alter our plans and land in front of the winch retrieve instead. It was a great reminder that circuits can be very dynamic and that it's important to constantly reassess the situation around you.

When the weather prevented us from flying, we still had plenty to do. We had briefings about how to set up a circuit, as well as helpful acronyms that could be used for checklists, such as HASELL and WULF. We also had the opportunity to use the flight simulator, which was a great way to continue practising and spending time with other scholars. Away from the airfield, we got to know each other much better, joking around and sharing stories. It was incredible to become so close with the other scholars, despite only knowing them for a few days, and laughing so hard my stomach hurt.



Overall, my week at the Midland Gliding Club was an absolutely amazing experience. It was so much more than simply getting into a glider and flying. I experienced what it was like to be part of a busy gliding club, working alongside instructors and members, helping on the ground and being responsible for one another's safety. I met a fantastic group of people and made friendships that I hope will last well beyond the scholarship.



I would like to say a massive thank you to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots for giving me this incredible opportunity, to RAFCT for sponsoring my scholarship, and to everyone at the Midland Gliding Club who made the week so enjoyable and memorable. It has inspired me to continue with gliding and has given me memories and experiences that I will never forget!

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